

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims to read as follows. Deletions are shown in ~~strikeout~~ text, while additions are underlined.

Please cancel Claims 28-30 without prejudice.

1. (Withdrawn) A method of making a skate boot upper, comprising:
 - providing a lateral quarter panel and a medial quarter panel joined at a heel counter, the quarter panels collectively having a generally continuous ankle edge having a first curvature;
 - providing an ankle support panel comprising a lower edge having a second curvature that is substantially different than the first curvature;
 - joining the ankle support panel lower edge to the quarter panel ankle edge so that the joined edges are biased inwardly.
2. (Withdrawn) The method of Claim 1, wherein a central portion of the first curvature curves about a first radius of curvature and a central portion of the second curvature curves about a second radius of curvature.
3. (Withdrawn) The method of Claim 1, wherein providing the ankle support comprises:
 - providing a flat material having the lower edge and an upper edge defining an interior portion therebetween;
 - creating a notch by removing a portion of material from the interior portion, the notch extending inwardly from one of the upper or lower edges and having opposing notch edges; and
 - joining the notch edges together so that the interior portion of the material deforms to form a convex bulge.
4. (Withdrawn) A skate boot comprising:
 - a medial quarter panel having top, bottom, front, and rear edges;
 - a lateral quarter panel having top, bottom, front and rear edges, the lateral and medial quarter panels being connected at their respective rear edges; and

an ankle cuff portion disposed above said medial quarter panel and lateral quarter panel, the ankle cuff portion comprising a plurality of contour seams configured so that the ankle cuff portion has a medial malleolar bulge and a lateral malleolar bulge.

5. (Withdrawn) The skate boot of Claim 4, wherein the ankle cuff portion is joined to the quarter panels along a main seam disposed generally below the malleolar bulges, and the main seam is biased inwardly.

6. (Withdrawn) The skate boot of Claim 5 additionally comprising a heel counter stiffener arranged inside the quarter panels and ankle cuff, the heel counter stiffener having an upper edge generally aligned with the main seam, the heel counter stiffener having a contour seam arranged so that the heel counter stiffener upper edge is biased generally inwardly.

7. (Withdrawn) The skate boot of Claim 6, wherein a second portion of the heel counter stiffener is biased generally outwardly.

8. (Withdrawn) The skate boot of Claim 4, wherein the medial quarter panel has a contour seam arranged to create a concave depression therein for fitting the boot to a skater's medial longitudinal arch.

9. (Withdrawn) The skate boot of Claim 4, wherein the lateral quarter panel has a contour seam arranged to create a convex bulge therein for fitting the boot to a skater's outstep.

10. (Withdrawn) The skate boot of Claim 4, wherein the medial malleolar bulge is displaced vertically higher than the lateral malleolar bulge.

11. (Withdrawn) The skate boot of Claim 4, further comprising an interior stiffener attached to an inside surface of one or more of the lateral quarter panel and medial quarter panel.

12. (Withdrawn) The skate boot of Claim 11, wherein the interior stiffener has a contour seam configured to introduce a contour into the interior stiffener.

13. (Withdrawn) The skate boot of Claim 12, wherein at least one of the lateral and medial quarter panels has a contour seam configured to introduce a contour into the panel, and the stiffener contour seam is not aligned with the panel contour seam.

14. (Withdrawn) The skate boot of Claim 4, additionally comprising an interior stiffener attached to an inside surface of ankle cuff.

15. (Withdrawn) The skate boot of Claim 14, wherein the interior stiffener includes a lateral malleolar bulge and/or a medial lateral bulge.

16. (Withdrawn) The skate boot of Claim 14, wherein the interior stiffener comprises at least one aperture generally aligned with one of the malleolar bulges of the ankle cuff.

17. (Withdrawn) The skate boot of Claim 16 additionally comprising a generally rigid ankle cap disposed adjacent at least one of the malleolar bulges of the ankle cuff.

18. (Withdrawn) The skate boot of Claim 5 additionally comprising an elongate force member attached to an outer surface of the medial quarter panel, a first end of the force member disposed adjacent an upper edge of the medial quarter panel, and at least a portion of the force member disposed adjacent the main seam.

19. (Withdrawn) The skate boot of Claim 18, wherein the force member is configured to communicate tension applied to the first end of the quarter panel along the length of the force member.

20. (Currently Amended) A method of making a skate boot upper, comprising:

providing a quarter panel having a curved ankle edge forming a first curvature;

providing an ankle support panel having a curved lower edge, the ankle support panel curved lower edge forming a second curvature that is different than the first curvature;

deforming at least one of the ankle edge and curved lower edge so that the second curvature formed by the ankle support panel curved lower edge to ~~generally correspond to~~ and the first curvature of the quarter panel curved ankle edge generally correspond to one another; and

joining the ankle support panel at its curved lower edge to the quarter panel along its curved ankle edge.

21. (Original) The method of Claim 20, wherein the quarter panel is a lateral quarter panel, and providing a medial quarter panel joined to the lateral quarter panel at a heel counter, the medial quarter panel having a curved ankle edge forming a third curvature.

22. (Original) The method of Claim 21, wherein the third curvature is different than the first curvature.

23. (Original) The method of Claim 21, wherein the third curvature is generally the same as the first curvature.

24. (Original) The method of Claim 21, wherein the lateral and medial quarter panel curved ankle edges are generally continuous.

25. (Original) The method of Claim 21, wherein the ankle support panel comprises a lateral portion and a medial portion, and comprising joining the curved lower edge of the lateral portion of the ankle support panel to the curved ankle edge of the lateral quarter panel and joining the curved lower edge of the medial portion of the ankle support panel to the curved ankle edge of the medial quarter panel.

26. (Original) The method of Claim 20 additionally comprising providing a heel counter stiffener having an upper edge that is generally aligned with the quarter panel curved ankle edges, and providing a contour seam configured so that the upper edge is biased generally inwardly.

27. (Original) The method of Claim 20 additionally comprising providing an ankle stiffener and securing the ankle stiffener adjacent the ankle support panel, wherein the ankle stiffener comprises an aperture generally corresponding to a malleolar portion of the ankle.

28. Cancelled

29. Cancelled

30. Cancelled

Please add the following new claims:

31. (New) A skate boot comprising:

a quarter panel having a curved upper edge forming a first curvature when the quarter panel is laid out substantially flat; and

an ankle cuff portion having a curved lower edge forming a second curvature when the ankle cuff portion is laid out substantially flat, the second curvature being different than the first curvature;

wherein the quarter panel upper edge and the ankle cuff portion lower edge are attached to one another so that the first and second curvatures are generally aligned with one another, and a portion of at least one of the quarter panel and ankle cuff portion at or adjacent the joined edges is biased in a direction generally transverse to the edges.

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32. (New) The skate boot of Claim 31, wherein the ankle cuff portion comprises a malleolar portion adapted to correspond to a malleolus of a wearer, and the joined edges are disposed below the malleolar portion and the portion of at least one of the quarter panel and ankle cuff portion at or adjacent the joined edges is biased inwardly.

33. (New) The skate boot of Claim 32 additionally comprising a stiffener having an upper edge that is generally aligned with the joined edges, wherein the upper edge of the stiffener is biased generally inwardly.

34. (New) The skate boot of Claim 32 additionally comprising an ankle stiffener arranged adjacent the ankle support panel, wherein the ankle stiffener comprises an aperture generally corresponding to a malleolar portion of the ankle support panel.